

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01

SP-02 IO-13 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /061 W

----- 090619

R 231227Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6044

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EALR, EFIN, ELAB, SA, BA, KS

SUBJECT: KOREAN LABOR IN KUWAIT

REF: (A) STATE 204539, (B) STATE 204540, (C) STATE 204541,
(D) ABU DHABI 2286

1. HOST COUNTRY REACTIONS TO KOREAN LABORERS
DESCRIBED IN REFS A AND B NOT YET NOTICEABLE HERE.
ACCORDING TO ROK TRADE COMMISSIONER, 5 CONSTRUCTION
PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY KOREAN COMPANIES IN KUWAIT
INVOLVE 1000 WORKERS, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT MAJORITY
OF THEM HAVE NOT YET ARRIVED. 800 WORKERS WILL BE
HOUSED ON FAILAKA ISLAND, OFF KUWAIT, BUILDING VILLAS
AND RESORT COMPLEX. AS THIS ISLAND IS SPARSELY POPU-
LATED, CONTACT OF KOREANS WITH KUWAITIS, OR EVEN EXTENT
OF KUWAITI KNOWLEDGE THEIR PRESENCE IN COUNTRY SHOULD
BE MINIMAL. KOREAN SEPARATENESS REINFORCED BY WORK
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HOURS, 2 SHIFTS FROM 2 A.M. TO NOON AND 4 P.M. TO 2 A.M.,

AND FACT THEY DO NOT BRING FAMILIES WITH THEM.

2. KOREANS CURRENTLY IN MIDST SUBMITTING FINAL PROPOSALS FOR 1800 UNIT ZAHRA HOUSING PROJECT (IN SUBURB OF KUWAIT CITY). IF THEY ARE AWARDED THIS CONTRACT, WORK WOULD REQUIRE AN ADDITIONAL 3000 KOREAN WORKERS IN KUWAIT. LARGER, 16,000 UNIT PROJECT IN PLANNING STAGE, IF WHOLLY OR PARTIALLY WON BY KOREANS, COULD RAISE TOTAL FIGURE KOREAN WORKERS IN COUNTRY TO WELL OVER 10,000.

3. WHILE TEN-FOLD OR MORE INCREASE NUMBER KOREANS IN KUWAIT WOULD HAVE IMPACT, THEIR NUMBER WOULD BE SMALL COMPARED TO 35,000 PLUS INDIAN AND PAKISTANI COMMUNITIES ALREADY HERE. KUWAITIS ARE QUITE USED TO FOREIGN WORKERS, AND ARE IN FACT A MINORITY IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY. IN DEALINGS WITH FELLOW ARAB INHABITANTS OF KUWAIT, KUWAITIS TEND TO STAY SOMEWHAT APART, AND WE DOUBT THAT KOREAN SEPARATENESS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY ANNOYING TO KUWAITIS.

4. INFUX OTHER FOREIGN WORKERS HAS CREATED MAJOR HOUSING PROBLEMS FOR KUWAITIS. ROK CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES HAVE BROUGHT THEIR OWN SIMPLE PREFABRICATED HOUSING FOR WORKERS WHICH ERECTED NEAR CONSTRUCTION SITES AND THUS DO NOT ADD FURTHER TO KUWAITI HOUSING PROBLEM. SUCH KOREAN SELF-SUFFICIENCY IS PROBABLY A PLUS, RATHER THAN MINUS IN KUWAITI EYES.

5. WHILE WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING NEGATIVE SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT KOREANS FROM KUWAITIS TO DATE, RECENT NEWS-PAPER EDITORIAL ASKED WHY KUWAIT IMPORTING NON-ARAB LABORERS, WHEN ARAB LABOR AVAILABLE. GIVEN THE VERY FEW KOREANS PRESENTLY ON THE KUWAIT MAINLAND, THERE IS LITTLE ON WHICH TO BASE OBSERVATION OF KUWAITI-KOREAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. SHOULD MORE KOREANS ARRIVE, WE WILL REPORT FURTHER ON THIS INTERESTING SUBJECT. INCIDENTALLY, ACCORDING TO AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN INVOLVED IN EXISTING KOREAN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS, SUPPLY OF SKILLED KOREAN WORKERS IS ALREADY SOMEWHAT STRAINED. IF SO, ASSUMPTION THAT KOREANS CAN SUPPLY NEARLY UNLIMITED AMOUNTS OF SKILLED LABOR FOR GULF PROJECTS MAY PROVE INVALID.

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MAESTRONE

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